

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 EA-07
TRSE-00 OMB-01 MCT-01 ACDA-07 DHA-02 CCO-00 /093 W
-----161037Z 109092 /14

O 160854Z APR 77 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 999
AMCONSUL LAHORE NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL KARACHI NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DACCA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE
CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 3738

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJECT: POLITICAL CRISIS NEARS CLIMAX

SUMMARY

THE PAKISTAN POLITICAL CRISIS APPEARS TO BE NEARING A CLIMAX.
THE OPPOSITION HAS SLAMMED THE DOOR ON A COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT.
RIFTS CONTINUE IN THE PPP. THE POLITICAL MOVES ARE TAKING PLACE
AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF CONTINUING DISTURBANCES MADE MORE
OMINOUS BY THE ERUPTION OF CLASHES BETWEEN OPPOSITION AND PPP
SUPPORTERS. THE PRESS IS WARNING OF THE DANGER OF CIVIL WAR IF
THE CRISIS IS NOT RESOLVED. THE PM IS SCHEDULED TO RETURN TO
PINDI TOMORROW. IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT HE WILL HOLD A PRESS
CONFERENCE AT THAT TIME, AND THERE IS INTENSE SPECULATION THAT HE
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WILL RESIGN. IT IS WIDELY ASSUMED THAT HE HAS REACHED THE END
OF HIS ROPE, BUT HE HAS GIVEN NO HINT OF THE COURSE HE PLANS
TO TAKE. END SUMMARY

1. THE PAKISTAN POLITICAL CRISIS APPEARS TO BE NEARING A CLIMAX.
SEVERAL IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS OCCURRED ON THE EVENING OF APRIL
15. MORE ARE EXPECTED SOON. THEY ARE TAKING PLACE AGAINST A

BACKGROUND OF CONTINUING DISTURBANCES IN THE MAJOR CITIES OF PUNJAB AND SIND, MADE MORE OMINOUS BY THE ERUPTION OF CLASHES BETWEEN OPPOSITION AND PPP SUPPORTERS. THE CONGENS ARE SENDING DETAILED REPORTS DIRECTLY TO SECSTATE ON THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATIONS IN THEIR AREAS. THIS MESSAGE PRINCIPALLY DISCUSSES THE LATEST SERIES OF POLITICAL MOVES.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER REMAINS IN LAHORE, WHERE HE PRESIDED YESTERDAY OVER A MARATHON SESSION OF THE FEDERAL CABINET. THE PROVINCIAL CHIEF MINISTERS AND, ACCORDING TO A PRESS REPORT, THE SERVICE CHIEFS WERE ALL IN LAHORE DURING THE MEETING. THE PN, WHO HAS NOW BEEN IN THE PUNJAB CAPITAL SINCE APRIL 8, IS SCHEDULED TO RETURN TO RAWALPINDI ON SUNDAY. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT HE WILL GIVE A "HIGHLY IMPORTANT" PRESS CONFERENCE THERE SOMETIME DURING THAT DAY.

3. THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE, OBVIOUSLY CONFIDENT THAT BHUTTO'S POSITION IS CONTINUING TO WEAKEN, HAS REASSERTED ITS INFLEXIBLE AND OBDURATE POSITION. THE PNA HAS FORMALLY REJECTED THE PROPOSAL PUT FORWARD BY ATTORNEY GENERAL YAHYA BAKHTIAR, ACTING ON THE PM'S BEHALF, TO END THE CONFRONTATION. THIS PROPOSAL HAS BEEN BRUITED ABOUT IN VARIOUS FORMS AND WITH VARIOUS DEGREES OF IMPUTED AUTHORITY SINCE BAKHTIAR FIRST MENTIONED IT ABOUT A WEEK AGO. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, IT WAS FORMALLY PUT TO OPPOSITION ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 15 WHEN BAKHTIAR GAVE NAWABZADA NASRULLAH KHAN, ACTING PNA CHIEF, A PROPOSAL FROM THE PM WHICH NOTED THAT BHUTTO "WOULD BE WILLING" TO CALL FRESH PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. IF THE PNA GETS THE MAJORITY OF VOTES CAST IN THE FOUR PAS TAKEN TOGETHER, THE PM WOULD THEN "BE PREPARED" CONFIDENTIAL

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TO DISSOLVE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND HOLD NEW ELECTIONS FOR IT AS WELL. THE AFTERNOON OF THE 15TH, THE PNA GENERAL COUNCIL REJECTED THE PM'S PROPOSAL NOTING IT WAS "ENTIRELY IRRELEVANT TO THE OBJECTIVES FOR WHICH THE PNA IS AGITATING", NAMELY THE PM'S RESIGNATIONS, FRESH ELECTIONS UNDER ARMY AND JUDICIARY SUPERVISION, AND A NEW ELECTION COMMISSION. THE COUNCIL ADDED THAT BHUTTO'S PROPOSAL WAS "NOT WORTHY OF ANY CONSIDERATION".

4. A FEW HOURS AFTER THE PNA REJECTION ANNOUNCEMENT, BHUTTO CALLED AT THE LAHORE RESIDENCE OF MAULANA MAUDOODI, FOUNDER AND LEADER EMERITUS OF THE JAMAAT-I-ISLAMI. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT SOME TEN DAYS AGO MAUDOODI HAD CALLED ON BHUTTO TO TAKE A NUMBER OF STEPS DESIGNED TO CREATE A MORE CONDUCIVE ATMOSPHERE FOR A DIALOGUE. HIS INITIATIVE HAD BEEN REGARDED AS A POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT BREAK IN THE RANKS OF THE INFLEXIBLE OPPOSITION. WHEN HE CALLED ON MAUDOODI LAST NIGHT, HOWEVER, BHUTTO FOUND HIM UNFORTHCOMING. THE MAULANA MET THE PRESS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE MEETING WITH THE PM AND SAID HE HAD EMPHATICALLY REITERATED THE PNA'S DEMANDS, INCLUDING THE CALL FOR BHUTTO'S RESIGNATION.

HE ADDED THAT HIS PROPOSALS TO BHUTTO LAST WEEK HAD BEEN OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS IN LAHORE LAST WEEK-END. HE ADDED THAT BHUTTO MUST RESIGN IF HE IS TO SAVE THE COUNTRY FROM CIVIL WAR. MAUDOODI CLOSED BY SAYING THE PM TOLD HIM THAT HE (BHUTTO) WOULD ANNOUNCE "HIS DECISION" AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IN PINDI ON APRIL 17.

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CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

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5. IN YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT CONCILIATION, BHUTTO ON APRIL 15 ANNOUNCED THAT THE PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS ORDINANCE OF 1963 WOULD BE REPEALED. HE SAID THIS WAS BEING DONE IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS ASSURANCES TO ALLOW FREEDOM OF THE PRESS. WITH THE REPEAL OF THE ORDINANCE, THERE ARE AS FAR AS WE CAN DISCERN NO FORMAL LEGAL RESTRICTIONS ON THE PRESS IN PAKISTAN AND IT IS, ON PAPER AT LEAST, COMPLETELY FREE. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS IS YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF A GESTURE MADE TOO LATE TO STRENGTHEN BHUTTO'S HAND. IT ALSO MERELY REFLECTS THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION SINCE FOR THE PAST TWO WEEKS THE PRESS HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY UNRESTRAINED IN ITS COVERAGE.

6. IN ANOTHER IMPORTANT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT,
SARDAR SHAUKAT HAYAT, PPP MNA, SENIOR PUNJABI POLITICIAN,
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AND FORMER MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS, CALLED ON ALL PPP MNA'S
TO GET TOGETHER IN ISLAMABAD WITHIN A WEEK OR SO TO CONSIDER
A SOLUTION TO THE SITUATION. HE SAID THAT HE WANTED TO "SAVE
THE BELEAGUERED CHAIRMAN (I.E. BHUTTO)" AND DID NOT WANT HIM
TO LEAVE OFFICE. HE SUGGESTED THAT IF ALL PPP MNA'S RESIGNED
AND OFFERED THEMSELVES FOR REELECTION, IT WOULD HELP THE PM
TO BREAK THE DEADLOCK. WE DOUBT IF HAYAT WAS ACTING ON
UNSELFISH MOTIVES IN ISSUING HIS CALL, MADE AT A MID-
NIGHT PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 15/16. IN A DISCUSSION WITH
THE POL COUNSELOR A DAY EARLIER, HE HAD SPOKEN OF A SOLUTION
INVOLVING BHUTTO'S OUSTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP AND
HIS REPLACEMENT BY A COALITION OF A STILL INTACT BUT
BHUTTOLESS PPP AND LIKE-MINDED ELEMENTS DRAWN FROM THE
PNA, TO BE HEADED, IT SEEMED CLEAR, BY HAYAT HIMSELF. HAYAT'S
HOPES OF PLAYING SUCH A ROLE ARE UNREALISTIC IN OUR
VIEW, BUT HIS ACTION SHOULD BE SEEN AS THE MOVE OF YET ANOTHER
PROMINENT POLITICIAN PUTTING DISTANCE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND
THE PM. OTHERS ARE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW.

7. SEVERAL DISQUIETING THEMES HAVE EMERGED DURING THE PAST
24 HOURS WHICH GIVE FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT THE PM'S POSITION
IS GRAVELY ENDANGERED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT IN SEVERAL PARTS
OF THE COUNTRY, THE SECURITY FORCES ARE BEGINNING TO STAND
BACK AND NOT INTERFERE WITH PNA RALLIES AND PROCESSIONS.
ALTHOUGH THIS MAY BE PARTIALLY DUE TO SOUND TACTICS ON THE
PART OF THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION, IT PROBABLY ALSO REFLECTS
A GROWING DESIRE ON THE PART OF THE SECURITY FORCES TO DISENGAGE
FROM THE CONFLICT. ALSO, THE PM HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO
ENCOURAGE PPP ELEMENTS INTO THE STREET TO CONFRONT AND ATTACK
PNA DEMONSTRATORS. THE POTENTIAL FOR BLOODSHED IS THEREBY
HEIGHTENED, AS IS THE PROBABILITY OF INCREASED CHAOS IN
THE STREETS. THIS KIND OF DEVELOPMENT HAS STRUCK
A PARTICULARLY ALARMING NOTE, AND HAS STRENGTHENED BOTH
THE FEELING THAT THINGS CANNOT GO ON THIS WAY AND THE
DEMAND THAT IMMEDIATE MEASURES BE TAKEN TO END THE CRISIS.
IN STRONG EDITORIALS THIS MORNING, BOTH JANG AND NAWA-I-WAQT,
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WIDELY CIRCULATING URDU DAILIES, WARN THAT THE COUNTRY IS
IN IMMINENT DANGER OF PLUNGING INTO CIVIL WAR IF THE PRESENT
CRISIS IS NOT RESOLVED.

8. A FINAL OMINOUS NOTE HAS BEEN STRUCK BY THE INCREASING INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS. IN THE GENERALLY QUIET FRONTIER PROVINCE, SEVERAL LARGE STUDENT FEDERATIONS REPRESENTING THE VARIOUS PARTIES IN THE PNA HAVE Banded TOGETHER TO WORK AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. (ALSO IN THE FRONTIER, THE PNA HAS CALLED FOR A COMPLETE HARTAL TOMORROW TO CLOSE DOWN THE PROVINCE.) THE IMPACT OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION WAS VIVIDLY SEEN IN RAWALPINDI YESTERDAY AND WAS REMINISCENT TO OBSERVERS OF THE BIG ROLE PINDI STUDENTS PLAYED IN THE ANTI-AYUB AGITATION IN 1968-69. THEIR LARGE DEMONSTRATION YESTERDAY IS SCHEDULED TO BE REPEATED TODAY AND ONWARD ON A DAILY BASIS.

9. THERE IS INTENSE SPECULATION THAT THE PM WILL ANNOUNCE HIS RESIGNATION DURING HIS NEWS CONFERENCE TOMORROW. IT IS NOW WIDELY ASSUMED THAT HE HAS REACHED THE END OF HIS ROPE, THAT HE IS BELEAGUED AND BESIEGED, AND THAT THE ONLY COURSE OPEN TO HIM NOW IS TO ABANDON THE PAKISTAN POLITICAL STAGE. BUT HE HAS GIVEN NO HINT OF WHAT COURSE HE IS TO TAKE, AND WE HAVE NO RELIABLE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW HE SIZES UP THE SITUATION, HOW CRITICAL HE REGARDS HIS POSITION, WHAT HE IS BEING ADVISED TO DO, OR BY WHOM.
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Message Attributes

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